

Securing Their Retirement

For chimpanzees in research labs, life is a cage lacking natural light, with loud sounds amplified by concrete walls, the smell of chemical cleaners, and brief episodes of terror when researchers do experiments. No amount of “enrichment”—toys or treats—can make up for the boredom, loneliness, and fear of existing in the equivalent of a prison cell.

“The lab environment is an insult,” says Rachel Weiss, who used to work at the Yerkes National Primate Research Center in Atlanta. “It’s not OK, and there’s no way to make it OK.”

In 2010, The HSUS continued pushing to have the nearly 1,000 chimps in U.S. labs moved to sanctuaries, where they can live in conditions simulating their wild forest homes. In a significant victory for animal protection groups, the National Institutes of Health reversed a plan to bring approximately 190 chimpanzees at New Mexico’s Alamogordo Primate Facility out of semi-retirement. Following the delivery of 25,000 letters from HSUS supporters, plus HSUS president and CEO Wayne Pacelle’s appearance at a press conference with New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, agency officials announced the animals would not be used for invasive tests until a review of chimpanzee research is completed.

At the same time, The HSUS released additional findings about the New Iberia Research Center in Louisiana, where a 2009 undercover investigation revealed more than 300 alleged violations of the Animal Welfare Act.

In 2010, after discovering the center appeared to be violating an NIH ban on breeding federally owned chimpanzees—with 14 of the infant chimps born there mauled to death—The HSUS petitioned the federal government to stop this taxpayer-supported breeding.

“I was sick,” says Jan McDaniel of her reaction to the undercover video taken at New Iberia. And when the Athens, Texas, woman gets angry, she doesn’t just stew about it; she acts. So she called The HSUS and ended up pledging \$100,000 to the Chimps Deserve Sanctuary Fund—half to be used for policy work and half to help pay for chimp retirement. “This will be well-spent if it will free those apes so they won’t have to suffer at the hands of humans,” she says. “If it will free those innocents.”

A federal bill originally introduced in 2009 would require their freedom by retiring the 500 federally owned chimps to sanctuaries. After receiving the support of 167 cosponsors in Congress, the proposed law was introduced again in 2011 as the Great Ape Protection and Cost Savings Act.

“We have a lot of public support,” says Kathleen Conlee, HSUS senior director for animal research issues. “It’s not a matter of whether it’s going to pass; it’s when.”

The HSUS also worked to get companies that have tested on chimpanzees to pay for their care when they are moved to sanctuaries. Using its weight as a shareholder, The HSUS gained a pledge of retirement funds from Abbott Laboratories.



Say No to Suffering: They’re not the kind of incidents that universities publicize: the mice found alive in freezers after botched euthanasia attempts. The animals who’ve overheated and died when antiquated temperature regulation systems failed. The monkeys who’ve languished in extreme pain for weeks during virus studies.

Poring over government records and published studies, The HSUS is prying open the closed doors of university research labs—and uncovering countless examples of animals who suffer and die needlessly. By the end of 2010, more than 60 universities and colleges had responded to our campaign urging them to adopt policies that prohibit severe animal suffering. For the holdouts, we’re mobilizing students, faculty, alumni, and other stakeholders to press for change. “They don’t need to have an animal suffering severely to learn what they are seeking to learn,” says The HSUS’s Kathleen Conlee. “This is a commonsense thing we’re asking institutions to do.”

A Revolution in Chemical Testing:

People are exposed to as many as 100,000 chemicals in the modern environment. Maybe 4 percent have been adequately tested for safety. That’s primarily because conventional methods—using animals—are slow and expensive.

They’re also inhumane, likely causing the suffering and deaths of millions of animals each year in the U.S. alone. In November 2010, The HSUS and partners gathered government, academic, and industry experts in Washington, D.C., to build support for a proposed 15-year, \$2 to \$3 billion Human Toxicology Project. Modeled on the Human Genome Project and based on recommendations from a National Academy of Sciences’ report, the massive animal-free undertaking would focus on high-speed automated tests on human cells and tissues. These techniques would provide quicker, more accurate results.

Thomas Hartung, director of the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing at Johns Hopkins University, says the project would be a watershed for science. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

EU Reforms Accelerated: Animal testing alternatives jumped on the fast-track with the 2010 launch of a groundbreaking collaboration between Humane Society International and leading scientists. The AXLR8 initiative is helping to spur a worldwide transition to animal-free safety testing using state-of-the-art human cell systems, robotics, and computer modeling, says HSI’s Troy Seidle.

HSI also helped secure EU approval of animal-free tests for detecting contaminants in shellfish, which will spare hundreds of thousands of animals from lethal poisoning tests. And years of work paid off in September when the EU passed new lab animal legislation that extends protections to more species, promotes alternatives, and requires a higher level of ethical review. As 2010 came to a close, HSI enlisted celebrity support for its Cruelty-Free 2013 campaign: Sporting an “End Animal Testing” temporary tattoo, singer Leona Lewis urged EU politicians to keep their promise to ban the sale of animal-tested cosmetics in 2013.

